



The Big Sky Country

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2007 JUL 25 P 3:17
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JUL 24 2007

FCC - MAILROOM

July 2, 2007

Kevin J. Martin, Chairman
Michael J Copps, Commissioner
Jonathan S Adelstein, Commissioner
Deborah Taylor Tate, Commissioner
Robert M McDowell, Commissioner

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington D. C. 20554

✓ RE: Universal Service Reform - WC Docket No. 05-337 & CC Docket No. 96-45

Dear Chairman and Commissioners:

I understand that the FCC is considering placing a cap on the use of the Universal Service Fund (USF) for wireless service. I am contacting you to express my opposition to this unfair, arbitrary proposal. Such an approach would result in a terrible disservice to rural consumers. Rural consumers want and need expanded and improved wireless services in rural areas for public safety, economic development, business and personal needs that are equally important to them as they are to urban consumers. This is one of the main benefits that rural consumers receive from the universal service fund, just as Congress envisioned when it initially established the fund. A wireless-only cap is clearly anti-competitive because it singles out wireless technology, which consumers are choosing more and more over landlines. We should be rewarding competition, not punishing it.

What's more, rural Americans deserve the same access to telecom services that are available in the rest of the country—isn't that the purpose of the USF?

Consumers in rural parts of Montana are no longer content to have access to only traditional wireline telephone service. Consumers are clearly demanding access to the benefits of mobility that only wireless service provides. This mobility results in extremely important public safety benefits in rural areas. As rural consumers travel from home to work or school, wireless service provides a very valuable safety tool. Without continued support for the expansion and upgrading of the rural wireless networks, consumers will not receive these benefits where they do not already exist. Universal service support is essential if rural consumers are to be provided service and rates comparable to those available in urban areas.

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Please consider what limiting the growth of wireless access will mean for rural America. Wireless technology plays an ever-increasing role in economic growth and is a critical instrument in emergency situations, but if the recommended cap is implemented, many communities may never realize these benefits. In a country that prides itself on equality, it seems hypocritical to restrict certain individuals' access to an essential tool simply because of their geographic location, especially when they have contributed for years to the USF along with everyone else.

I respectfully request that you carefully consider these facts as you seek to reform the existing fund. I ask you to find competitively neutral proposals to slow fund growth, ensure accountability for how these funds are used; and promote the continued expansion and improvement of these much needed services in rural areas by targeting funds to high cost areas rather than by targeting reforms to wireless providers. I urge you to vote against the proposed cap on universal service support for wireless service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Walter McNutt", followed by a horizontal line.

Walter McNutt
House District 37